# **Meeting Summary for Thrive Union Focus Group-ATU**

May 22, 2024 04:50 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada) ID: 857 9506 8806

**Quick recap**

OmniTrans Drivers: 7 participants/ all female ages 30 - 60

The team discussed various challenges and potential solutions related to job opportunities in the Inland Empire region, including addressing language and childcare barriers, and considering the need for snow days in the company policy. They also explored the inadequacies of current social safety nets and the vulnerability of their roles, with a focus on the experiences of low-wage workers and the need for improved protection. Lastly, they discussed the ongoing Thrive project and potential partnership opportunities, reminding everyone to participate and fill out the reimbursement form.

**Summary**

Increasing Job Opportunities in Inland Empire Fatima from the Ie. Labor Institute led a focus group discussion about increasing job opportunities in the Inland Empire region. She highlighted the Thrive Inland project, a joint initiative aimed at creating high-quality job opportunities for underrepresented groups, and emphasized the importance of feedback from the community to make this project successful. The attendees shared their thoughts on the main barriers to good employment in the area, with a focus on drug testing and background checks as significant hurdles. Fatima encouraged attendees to share their ideas through an online jam board and thanked them for their participation.

**Addressing Childcare Challenges in Workforce** The team discussed the challenges faced by non-bilingual individuals in the job market and the high costs of childcare. Fatima brought up the idea of partnering with a non-profit to provide on-site childcare services at the union, a suggestion that was positively received. Joanne mentioned that a childcare center had been discussed for future consideration at Omnitrans meetings. The team also considered transportation as a potential issue, but concluded that for most, the primary problem was childcare.

**Language Barriers, Transportation, and Snow Days** Tonya shared her experiences with language barriers in her work with non-English speaking utility workers. Fatima showed interest in this issue and proposed building a pathway to address this barrier. Joanne brought up the high cost of living and transportation difficulties in the high desert, which deter people from living there. The team discussed their company policies regarding employee absences due to inclement weather, with Tonya confirming that employees wouldn't be penalized for snow days, but would have to use their available time off. The team agreed that their contract should include provisions for snow days, with this issue to be discussed further in future meetings.

**Discussing Vulnerable Populations' Challenges** Fatima, Boss, Tonya, and Joanne discussed the challenges faced by vulnerable populations, specifically in regards to child care and living expenses. They discussed the high costs of child care, with some centers charging up to $5 per minute, and the unaffordability of housing, with some landlords charging $3,000 for a three-bedroom apartment or house. They also discussed the low wages of utility workers, with some earning only $17 per hour. The group also discussed the concept of a liveable wage, with researchers connected to the project suggesting a wage of $30 per hour. They concluded by discussing the rising prices of basic items, such as a medium Starbucks drink now costing $6.95.

**Discussing Workplace Social Safety Nets and Challenges** Tonya shared that a coworker was struggling to afford basic necessities, including food. This sparked a discussion about the inadequacies of current social safety nets, with Fatima and the Boss suggesting that more consideration should be given to individual circumstances such as rent and living expenses. Joanne emphasized the importance of respect and appreciation in the workplace, arguing that a good job should be more than just a high salary. The group also discussed the challenges faced by low-wage workers, with the Boss citing cases of overworking and lack of concern from upper management.

**Drivers' Safety Concerns and Traumatic Incidents** Tonya shared that two of their drivers had experienced traumatic incidents involving weapons. One driver was shot with a beep gun and another was attacked, resulting in both needing time off due to the trauma. The team discussed their concern for their safety and the lack of a clear protocol for handling such situations. They also shared personal experiences of similar incidents or near-misses, emphasizing the vulnerability of their roles. The team expressed worry about potential copycats and the need for improved protection.